

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

INFO ALL NATO CAPITALS

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO, AWACS, MILI

SUBJECT: BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN PROCUREMENT PHASE OF

-- NATO AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING (AEW)

REF:A.USNATO 3717 DTG 011401Z JUL 76

-- B.USNATO 3764 DTG 021905Z JUL 76

1. SUMMARY. THE JUNE NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING SET AS A GOAL A DECISION ON PROCUREMENT OF A NATO AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM (AEW) BY THE DECEMBER MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. DECEMBER, THEREFORE, BECOMES THE CRITICAL DEADLINE FOR MUSTERING ALLIANCE SUPPORT. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT AS MANY COUNTRIES AS POSSIBLE PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCUREMENT PHASE TO SHOW THE WIDESPREAD SUPPORT THAT WOULD EN-
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HANCE MINISTERIAL APPROVAL IN THE DECEMBER DPC MEETING.

AT LEAST CANADA, NORWAY, BELGIUM AND ITALY SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE PROCUREMENT PHASE ALONG WITH UK, FRG, AND US WHO ARE PRESENTLY MAKING THEIR PLANS TO PARTICIPATE. BELGIUM'S SHARE WOULD BE ABOUT DOLS 100 MILLION OVER 8 YEAR PERIOD OR DOLS 12.5 MILLION PER YEAR. REQUEST EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON BEST APPROACHES WHICH CAN BE MADE TO BELGIANS TO SECURE THEIR COMMITMENT TO PARTICIPATION IN PROCUREMENT BY EARLY FALL. END SUMMARY.

2. THE JUNE 1976 MINISTERIAL MEETINGS SET AS A GOAL A DECISION ON PROCUREMENT OF A NATO AEW FORCE BY THE DECEMBER 1976 MINISTERIAL MEETINGS. AT THIS TIME WE ESTIMATE THE PROCUREMENT COST OF 25-27 NATO AWACS AIRCRAFT TO BE ABOUT DOLS 2.4 BILLION. PROVIDED SUFFICIENT COUNTRIES PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCUREMENT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COUNT ON CONTRIBUTIONS OF DOLS 2.08 BILLION FROM THE US, FRG, UK AND CANADA. THIS WOULD STILL LEAVE A COMMITMENT SHORTFALL OF ABOUT DOLS 320 MILLION. WE NEED TO SECURE THOSE COMMITMENTS, AT LEAST IN PRINCIPLE, BY SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER SO THAT ADEQUATE PREPARATIONS CAN BE MADE FOR THE DECEMBER MINISTERIAL DECISION.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT NORWAY, BELGIUM AND ITALY REPRESENT GOOD PROSPECTS FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THIS DOLS 320 MILLION SHORTFALL. THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN GREECE, TURKEY, AND PORTUGAL ARE NOT CONDUCIVE TO THEIR PARTICIPATION NOW. DENMARK AND THE NETHERLANDS HAVE STRONG MILITARY OPPOSITION AND ARE STRUGGLING TO WITHSTAND STRONG POLITICAL AND PUBLIC PRESSURE TO CUT RATHER THAN INCREASE THEIR DEFENSE EXPENDITURES; LUXEMBOURG AND ICELAND WOULD NOT HAVE THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL OR MILITARY RESOURCES. WE ESTIMATE THAT THE REQUIRED PROCUREMENT COMMITMENTS FOR THESE COUNTRIES WOULD BE: NORWAY, DOLS 70 MILLION, BELGIUM, DOLS 100 MILLION AND ITALY, DOLS 150 MILLION, TO BE SPREAD OVER THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS. THUS, BELGIUM'S SHARE WOULD AVERAGE A MODEST DOLS 12.5 MILLION PER YEAR.

4. THE FOLLOWING BACKGROUND MATERIAL MAY BE USEFUL TO CONFIDENTIAL

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EMBASSY IN RECOMMENDING APPROACHES TO THE BELGIANS.

A. ACQUISITION OF A NATO AEW WILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL IMPACT ON THE ALLIANCE, SERVE AS A VALUABLE AID TO POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT, AND PROVIDE A HIGHLY VISIBLE EXPRESSION OF THE ALLIES' WILL TO CONTINUE PROJECTING A STRONG DEFENSE POSTURE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR COMMON INTERESTS. MOST IMPORTANT, A

NATO AEW CAPABILITY WILL PRESERVE A CREDIBLE DETERRENT POSTURE BY PROVIDING THE ONLY FEASIBLE MEANS OF CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT.

B. AWACS IS ESSENTIALLY AN INFORMATION GATHERING SYSTEM, PROVIDING VALUABLE DATA ON UNFRIENDLY MOVEMENTS AND ADEQUATE TIME TO ANALYZE WHETHER THEY ARE MERELY MANEUVERS AND EXERCISES OR AN ATTACK. AS SUCH, THE SYSTEM IS ESSENTIALLY A DEFENSIVE ONE AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED

AS PROVOCATIVE BY THE SOVIETS. A NATO AEW WOULD NOT BE AN ESCALATION OF THE ARMS RACE. SOVIET TECHNOLOGY HAS ITS OWN PACE WHICH IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON REACTION TO NATO SYSTEMS. IN FACT, THE SOVIETS ALREADY HAVE AN AEW SYSTEM, THOUGH IT IS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS CAPABLE.

C. THE NATO AEW IS A SIGNIFICANT TECHNOLOGICAL BREAK-THROUGH AND IMPROVEMENT OVER THE PRESENT NADGE AND COMMAND AND CONTROL POSTURE IN NATO. RECENT SHAPE TECHNICAL CENTER REPORTS HAVE SHOWN THAT THE NATO AEW IS CLEARLY SUPERIOR TO GROUND BASED RADAR BY ITSELF. OPTIMUM EFFECTIVENESS IS ACHIEVED WHEN THE TWO SYSTEMS ARE INTEROPERABLE.

D. COSTS FOR THE NATO AEW WILL BE BROADLY AND EQUITABLY SHARED. COUNTRIES THAT DO NOT BEAR THE COST OF PROCUREMENT WILL BE EXPECTED TO PAY OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE COSTS (WHICH WILL BE APPROXIMATELY DOLS 100 MILLION PER YEAR WHEN THE FULL NATO AEW FORCE IS OPERATIONAL).

E. SATELLITES CANNOT PERFORM THE SAME MISSION AS AWACS. SUCH TECHNOLOGY IS A LONG WAY OFF AND THUS AWACS IS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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LIKELY TO BE REPLACED BY SATELLITES IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

F. THE SYSTEM PROVIDES NOT REAL TIME ADVANCE WARNING OF POTENTIAL UNFRIENDLY AIR AND SEA MOVEMENTS, BUT ALSO COMMAND AND CONTROL FOR DIRECTING FRIENDLY FIGHTER FORCES WHEN NECESSARY, AS WELL AS A REAL TIME BATTLE SITUATION IN SUPPORT OF REINFORCEMENTS AND RESUPPLY. THE LOOK-DOWN TECHNOLOGY OF THE NATO AEW PRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT ADVANCE, SINCE NEW SOVIET AIRCRAFT CAN NOW PENETRATE GROUND BASED RADAR AT LOW ALTITUDES. THE AWACS, F-15, F-16 TEAM SHOULD PROVIDE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE DEFENSE.

5. IN ADDITION TO THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY BENEFITS BELGIUM ACQUIRES FROM THE EXISTENCE OF THE AEW BELGIAN INDUSTRY CAN SECURE EXTENSIVE WORK WITHIN THE PROCURE-

MENT PHASE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE FOR THE PRODUCTION OF THE AIRCRAFT ENGINE. THE PRATT-WHITNEY ENGINE PROGRAM CALLS FOR 100 PERCENT OFFSET PRODUCTION IN EUROPE AND PRATT-WHITNEY CONSIDERS THREE BELGIAN FIRMS AS COMPETITIVE IN THE MANUFACTURE OF DISCS AND BRAKES. ALTERNATIVELY, USE OF THE FRENCH CFM-56 (GE-SNECMA) ENGINE WOULD, WE UNDERSTAND, ALSO INVOLVE COMPONENT PRODUCTION IN BELGIUM.

6. ALTHOUGH AEW IS A NATO PROGRAM AND EFFORT, WE HOPE THAT GOB WILL SUPPORT US CALL FOR NATO TO MOVE AHEAD ON THIS PRACTICAL BASIS NOW. IT CLEARLY WOULD BE IN BELGIUM'S SELF-INTEREST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCUREMENT PHASE OF AEW WHICH WOULD EXTEND THE US-BELGIAN COOPERATION GENERATED BY SUCH ACTIONS AS THE US ARMY'S SELECTION OF THE BELGIAN MAG-58 MACHINE GUN AND US-BELGIAN EFFORTS IN THE FIVE-NATION F-16 CONSORTIUM.

7. IN MESSAGES SIMILAR TO THIS WE HAVE ADVISED EMBASSIES OTTAWA, OSLO AND ROME OF US VIEWS AND ASKED FOR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON EFFECTIVE METHODS OF APPROACHING GOVERNMENTS IN LIGHT OF LOCAL SITUATIONS. WOULD APPRECIATE SIMILAR ASSISTANCE FROM EMBASSY BRUSSELS IN OUR CONTINUING EFFORT TO OBTAIN ALLIANCE SUPPORT FOR THE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT NATO AWACS PROGRAM. HABIB

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